

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

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E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: US-ETHIOPIA RELATIONS

1. EXCERPTS FROM WEDNESDAY PRESS BRIEFING:

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2. Q. BOB, WHEN YOU TALK ABOUT THE ETHIOPIAN ARMS REQUEST BEING "UNDER STUDY" I BELIEVE IS THE WORD -- JUST MECHANICALLY, HOW DOES THAT WORK? WHO TAKES FIRST CRACK AT IT HERE -- THE POLITICAL/MILITARY BUREAU OR -- COULD YOU EXPLAIN THE STUDY PROCESS? DOES IT COME TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT BEFORE IT GOES TO DEFENSE AND SO ON?

A. ON BACKGROUND, STU, I CAN ONLY ASSUME THAT SUCH A REQUEST WOULD FIRST COME TO THE BUREAU OF AFRICAN AFFAIRS, AND IT WOULD HAVE PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY, AND FROM THAT POINT IT WOULD BE STAFFED OUT WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT AS WELL AS WITHIN THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH OF THE GOVERNMENT.

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Q. THE AFRICAN BUREAU WOULD JUST BE ABLE TO ASSESS THE
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POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF IT AND PASS THE FINDINGS ON, WOULDN'T THEY? I MEAN THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC, AND SO FORTH. UNLESS THEY HAVE MORE MILITARY EXPERTS THERE THAN I THINK THEY HAVE.

A. WELL AGAIN ON BACKGROUND, I DON'T THINK I AM REALLY ABLE TO COMMENT AS TO WHAT EXTENT -- OR WHAT THE EXACT CONTRIBUTION THE BUREAU OF AFRICAN AFFAIRS IS -- ON THIS SUBJECT.

Q. BOB, ABOUT A YEAR AGO THERE WAS SOME TALK ABOUT WEAPONS SALES TO ETHIOPIA. IS THERE ANYTHING IN THE PIPELINE NOW FROM EARLIER CONTRACTS? TANKS, I BELIEVE --

A. I'LL HAVE TO CHECK THAT, OZZIE, I DON'T KNOW THE STATUS OF THE PIPELINE. END WEDNESDAY EXCERPTS.

3. EXCERPTS FROM THURSDAY PRESS BRIEFING:

Q. REPORTS FROM ETHIOPIA SAY THAT AMERICANS HAVE BEEN ORDERED TO LEAVE ASMARA. DO YOU HAVE INFORMATION ON THIS?

A. LET ME GIVE YOU WHAT LITTLE I HAVE, TO BRING YOU UP TO DATE ON THE LATEST SITUATION THERE, AND SEE IF THIS HELPS AT ALL:

AS OF 2:00 O'CLOCK YESTERDAY THAT'S ETHIOPIAN TIME WHICH I ASSUME IS ABOUT SIX OR SEVEN HOURS DIFFERENCE FROM OURS ASMARA WAS REPORTED CALM. WHAT APPEARED TO BE A COORDINATED INSURGENT ATTACK OCCURRED THE NIGHT BEFORE, AND LASTED OVER THREE HOURS.

U.S. GOVERNMENT INSTALLATIONS WERE IN THE CENTER OF THIS BRIEF STRUGGLE, AND SUFFERED SOME MINOR DAMAGES. I HAVE NOT THE DETAILS ON THAT, BUT THERE ARE NO REPORTS OF ANY AMERICAN CASUALTIES.

NOW, HOW ABOUT THE AMERICANS REMAINING IN ASMARA AS OF NOW?

THERE ARE A LITTLE OVER 80 TOTAL. THERE ARE ABOUT
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SEVENTY-ODD GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES AND ABOUT TEN PRIVATE AMERICAN CITIZENS.

ELSEWHERE IN ERITREA THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY FORTY AMERICANS, AND THESE ARE PRINCIPALLY MISSIONARIES AND THEIR FAMILIES.

Q. ARE WE PLANNING TO EVACUATE ANY OF THESE PEOPLE?

A. RIGHT AS OF THIS TIME, THERE IS NO PRESENT PLAN TO EVACUATE ANY MORE PERSONNEL.

DOES THAT HELP OUT ENOUGH?

Q. CAN WE GO BEYOND THE FATE OF THESE FEW AMERICANS, WHICH IS VERY IMPORTANT --

WHILE YOU WERE AWAY, THE IMPRESSION WE GOT HERE, MAKING INQUIRIES, WAS THAT, WELL, EVERYTHING HAS TO WAIT UNTIL THE SECRETARY'S RETURN.

THERE SHOULD BE, I WAS TOLD, A "DECISION IN PRINCIPLE" AS TO WHAT TO DO, WHOM TO SUPPORT -- THE PRINCIPLE OF THE RIGHT FOR SELF DETERMINATION OF THE ERITREANS -- OR OPPOSING ANY AMERICANIZATION OF ETHIOPIA.

DO YOU EXPECT THE DECISION TO COME SOON? IT HAS A PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCE HERE IN THE U.S. YOU KNOW THAT THERE IS AN URGENT REQUEST FOR ARMS FROM THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT WHICH IS "UNDER STUDY."

A. I ASKED ABOUT THAT THIS MORNING, BECAUSE I KNOW WHILE I WAS AWAY THAT THE SUBJECT CAME UP HERE, AND I AM TOLD THAT THAT SUBJECT IS UNDER STUDY.

WHEN I CAN TAKE YOU BEYOND THAT, I WILL. BUT I LOOKED INTO THAT THIS MORNING, ENDRE, JUST BEFORE I CAME DOWN.

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